

PECULIARITIES OF INSTRUMENTAL NOUNS IN THAI¹

Udom Warotamasikkhadit

This paper aims to show that a prepositional phrase signifying *Instrumental Adverb* does not exist in deep structure as has been assumed by a number of transformational grammarians.² I will argue that the instrumental prepositional phrase in Thai is transformationally derived from another source of basic structure, that is, from a sentence containing *chây* 'to use'.³ I fully realize that an instrumental noun does not play a significant role in the Thai language as it does in some Indo-European and American Indian languages, where instrumental forms are overtly signified. It is amazing how Thai speakers can sort out the instrumental nouns in surface structure from other patient nouns, as both superficially appear in the same position in a sentence, for example:

- (1) a. khăw kin tàkìap
he eat chopstick
He eats with chopsticks.
b. khăw kin kŭaytĭaw
he eat noodle
He is eating noodles.
- (2) a. khăw khĭan mĭi sáy
he write hand left
He writes with his left hand.
b. khăw khĭan còtmăay
he write letter
He is writing a letter.
- (3) a. khăw hŭŋ thaan
she cook charcoal
She cooks with charcoal.

Udom Warotamasikkkhadit

- b. khăw hŭŋ khâaw
she cook rice
She is cooking rice.
- (4) a. khăw yŋ p++n
he shoot gun
He is shooting (by using a gun).
- b. khăw yŋ nók
he shoot bird
He shot a bird.
- (5) a. khăw yép càk
he sew machine
He sews.
- b. khăw yép sâa
she sew blouse
She is sewing a blouse.
- (6) a. khăw thaa lípsàtìk
she paint lipstick
She puts on lipstick.
- b. khăw thaa nâa
she paint face
She paints her face.

It is evident that (1a), (2a), (3a), (4a), (5a), and (6a) contain an instrumental noun while (1b), (2b), (3b), (4b), (5b), and (6b) contain a patient noun in the surface structure.

Deep Structure of Instrumental Nouns

Neither Fillmore (1968) nor Chafe (1970) distinguishes two kinds of instrumental nouns as is proposed in this paper. Fillmore (1968) considers an instrumental case as “the case of the inanimate force or object causally involved in the action or state identified by a verb.”⁴

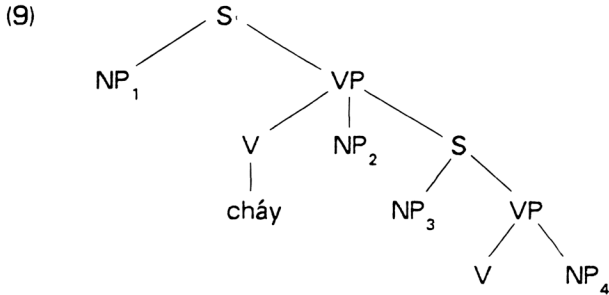
Peculiarities of Instrumental Nouns

Chafe (1970) considers “an instrument being some object which plays a role in bringing a process about, but which is not the motivating force, the cause or the instigator. It is subsidiary to the agent—something which the agent uses.”⁵

Let us consider the following sentences:

- (7) a. khăw chây tàkìap kin khâaw
 he use chopstick eat rice
 He uses chopsticks to eat rice.
- b. khăw kin khâaw dūay tàkìap
 he eat rice with chopstick
 He eats rice with chopsticks.
- c. khăw kin tàkìap
 he eat chopstick
 He eats with chopsticks.
- (8) a. khăw chây thâaw pèet pratuu
 he use foot open door
 He uses his foot to open the door.
- b. khăw pèet pratuu dūay thâaw
 he open door with foot
 He opens the door with his foot.
- c. khăw pèet thâaw⁶
 he open foot
 He uncovers his foot.

Note that (7a), (7b), and (7c) are related, but (8c) is not related to (8a) and (8b), and *thâaw* ‘foot’ is not an instrumental noun as *tàkìap* ‘chopstick’ is in (7c). There is parallelism between (7a) and (8a), (7b) and (8b), but not between (7c) and (8c). I propose that the sentence underlying (7a), (7b), and (7c) is different from the sentence underlying (8a) and (8b).



NP₁ must be animate and NP₂ must be inanimate. The noun following *cháy* 'to use' will be an instrumental noun as follows:

$$(10) \quad X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \rightarrow X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \quad [+inst1]$$

if NP₁ = NP₃

$$(11) \quad X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \rightarrow X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \quad [+inst2]$$

if NP₂ = NP₃

The feature [+instrumental 1] will be incorporated in NP₂ if NP₁ is the same as NP₃, and the feature [+instrumental 2] if NP₂ is the same as NP₃.

Let us consider the deep structure of (7a).

$$(12) \quad \begin{array}{cccccc} \text{khăw} & \text{cháy} & \text{tàk}^{\text{àp}} & \text{khăw} & \text{kin} & \text{khâaw} \\ \text{he} & \text{use} & \text{chopstick} & \text{he} & \text{eat} & \text{rice} \end{array}$$

By applying rule (10), *tàk^{àp}* 'chopstick' in (12) will be assigned [+instrumental 1] because NP₁, the one who uses chopsticks, and NP₃, the one who eats rice, are the same person.

Let us also consider the deep structure of (8a).

Peculiarities of Instrumental Nouns

- (13) khǎw cháy tháaw tháaw p̄əet pratuu
he use foot foot open door

By applying rule (11), *tháaw* 'foot' in (13) will be assigned [+instrumental 2] because NP₂, the instrument the agent (NP₁) uses, is the same as NP₂, the instrument that opens the door.⁷

By applying the identical NP deletion transformation to (12) and (13), (7a) and (8a) will be respectively obtained.

- (14) $X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy } \text{NP}_2 \text{ V } \text{NP}_4 \text{ Y} \rightarrow X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ V } (\text{NP}_4) \text{ d\hat{u}ay } \text{NP}_2 \text{ Y}$

- (15) $X NP_1 V (NP_4) d\acute{u}ay NP_2 Y \rightarrow X NP_1 V NP_2 Y$
[+inst1] [+inst1]

Note that both (7a) and (8a) will undergo rule (14), yielding (7b) and (8b), respectively. Only (7b), not (8b), can undergo rule (15) because NP₂ of (8b) does not contain the [+instrumental 1] feature as of (7b). It also must be noted that *dûay* 'with' in (15) will be deleted together with NP₄ or when there is no NP₄ preceding it. The following sentences are ungrammatical.

- (16) *khǎw kin khâaw tàkiap
he eat rice chopstick

- (17) *khǎw pəət pratuu tháaw
he open door foot

In order for (2a), (3a), (4a), (5a), and (6a) to be derived, they must undergo rule (14) and rule (15).

Conclusion

It is obvious that *chây* 'to use' plus an instrumental inanimate noun are the source for *Instrumental Adverb* or instrumental prepositional phrase in the Thai language. I am certain that *Manner Adverb* in Thai does not belong to deep structure either.⁸

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars and the University of Pittsburgh. The research was conducted at the University of Pittsburgh when I was appointed Visiting Professor of Linguistics and Asian Studies in 1979–80. I wish to thank Professor Edward M. Anthony for arranging my visit to the University of Pittsburgh and Ramkhamhaeng University for granting my leave of absence.
2. Chomsky (1965) includes prepositional phrases (Prep-phrase) in the deep structure but it is not clear that he has an instrumental prepositional phrase in mind. Lakoff (1968:5) states that "it has been maintained throughout traditional grammar that simple sentences may contain not only subjects, predicates, and objects, but also a full range of adverbials modifying the predicate. To date, this position has been carried over into transformational grammar."
3. There are many uses of *chây* 'to use' among Thai speakers, for example:

khăw	chây	lûuk	kaw	lăŋ
he	use	son	scratch	back
He told his son to scratch his back.				

Lûuk 'son or daughter', which is an animate noun, is not an instrumental noun.

4. Fillmore (1968:24). I would like to remind the readers of the existence of a sentence like

phǒm	chây	chiwít	khǎw	phǒm	tham	ŋaan	hây	prathêetchâat
I	use	life	of	I	do	work	give	country
I spend my life working for the country.								

Peculiarities of Instrumental Nouns

To me, *chiiwít* 'life' is an animate noun and it can be used as an instrumental noun as well. I wonder whether *chiiwít* 'life' will contradict the definition given by a number of authors.

5. Chafe (1970:152–55) feels that an instrument seems to resemble agents in his English examples but it also resembles patients in Thai, as in (1–6).
6. *Tháaw* 'foot' in (8c) is a patient, and the meaning of *pəət* in (8c) is not the same as *pəət* in *pəət pratuu* 'to open the door' in (8a) and (8b). It roughly means 'to uncover'.
7. Note that it is not the person who opens the door, but his foot. Thus, I do not consider NP₃ to be the same as NP₁.
8. Lakoff (1965) attempts to argue that many adverbs, including manner adverbs, are transformationally derived from other, more basic structures.

References

- Chafe, Wallace L. *Meaning and the Structure of Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton, 1965.
- _____. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965.
- Fillmore, Charles J. "The Case for Case." In *Universals in Linguistic Theory*, edited by Emmon Bach and Robert T. Harms, 1–88. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.
- Lakoff, George. "On the Nature of Syntactic Irregularity." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1965.
- _____. "Instrumental Adverbs and the Concept of Deep Structure." *Foundations of Language* 4, no. 1 (February 1968):4–29.
- Warotamasikkhadit, Udom. *Introduction to Linguistics* (in Thai). Bangkok: Department of Teachers Training, Ministry of Education, 1970.
- _____. *Thai Syntax: An Outline*. The Hague: Mouton, 1972.

